very effective, and Archbold nicely captures a mixture of wonder, bewilderment, excitement, and fear as his fictional kids try to come to terms with what is occurring around them. Sidebars which provide the historical context for the events do not disturb the flow of the narrative, and the diction is relaxed and naturalistic throughout the book; an internet chat between two teens on New Year's Eve 1999 is particularly effective, as is a young woman's lovestruck account of Expo67 in Montreal that is positively dripping with teen angst. Without giving away any secrets, Archbold also does a wonderful job of using the final vignette to bring the book full circle in quite a charming way.

The buildings we encounter every day also tell stories, and Bonnie Shemie uses the nation's architectural heritage to describe Canada's evolution from colonial outpost to modern country. It is partly a guide to architectural forms (the sumptuous illustrations and handy glossary will be useful to any young traveller with an interest in buildings), but it is also a primer on Canadian history, for the author shows how architecture has reflected changing times and influences. The First Nations and early settlers built with the materials that were available to them, their designs determined by the harsh realities of the landscape and climate. Later, styles were imported from Europe so that European societies could be reproduced in North America, but even then allowances had to be made for local conditions. Newcomers from other nations also brought different architectural features, turning streetscapes into fusions of different styles, and modern architecture blended the old and the new, with old elements being interpreted in new materials and forms. In *Building Canada*, Shemie has focused on some of the country's best-known buildings, but one can easily walk the streets of any town with the book in hand and find the same kinds of stories told in wood, brick, and stone.

Both of these books are ultimately about finding great stories from the past where they are least expected, whether it be in the photographs that exist in countless attics or in the structures that line our streets. The nation's history is imprinted on a thousand different artifacts that we encounter every day. With a little imagination, we can read in those artifacts the story of Canada's past in the same way that Archbold and Shemie have done in these fine books.

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Two Realistic Narratives of Maritime Life

Duncan's Way. Ian Wallace. Groundwood, 2000. Unpag. $16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-388-9. ***Boy of the Deeps.*** Ian Wallace. Groundwood, 1999. Unpag. $16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-356-0.

Unlike his colourful earlier books (such as *Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance* and *Morgan the Magnificent*), which focus on moments of celebration and adventure, two of the latest books by multiple award-winner Ian Wallace introduce young readers to the harsher realities of everyday life in both Newfoundland and Cape

Breton.

Duncan's Way is set in Newfoundland at the time when "The cod had disappeared from the ocean's depths and with them went a way of life." The importance of the cod is emphasized by the blue-green endpapers, across which sweeps an enormous fish — which then gives way to the title page scene of a line of fishing boats propped up and idle on shore. Out of work for eighteen months, Duncan's father is "silent and sad," sunk into depression and passivity. He is pictured in a closed-in space, wielding the remote control in one hand and cradling a bowl of popcorn as he stares at a massive television. In contrast, Duncan is determined to take action, to gain back the life his family enjoyed "before the foreign factory ships had sucked the cod from the ocean. Or the seals had swallowed them up. Or men like his father had overfished the stocks." Atop a rugged brown rock (a visual parallel to the television set), with a dark church behind him, a defiant Duncan confronts the sea: "My dad was born to the sea.... I'm gonna get him back there!"

The story then follows a pattern common in picture books: a child solves a problem with the help of an adult who is not a family member. In this case, a retired fisherman who recreates a past way of life with his model trains helps Duncan reason out a solution: "So boy; if there aren't any cod to fish, what do people need that your dad can take to them by boat?" Duncan's idea of a boat delivering bread and buns to the outports inspires his family to work together to transform his father's boat into "a floating bakery" — an original resolution certain to appeal to young readers.

The predominantly vertical and horizontal lines of the watercolour illustrations, together with the pale greens, blues, and greys, create an impression of calm and coolness. The austere landscape of rock, church, cemetery, and iceberg is softened by the pale green grass dotted with yellow flowers. At the heart of the story, the calm is disrupted by several surrealistic illustrations: of Duncan's dream images, strange iceberg shapes, and an unusual juxtaposition of Duncan's face in close-up behind the model of sea and rocky shore. Throughout the book, a variety of visual devices frame and draw further attention to the characters: a clothesline, a picket fence, windows, poles, and gravestones. The last illustration, however, has no frame; there, Duncan stands out as though moving forward out of the background, triumphantly displaying aloft the loaves of bread.

In *Boy of the Deeps* also, a boy has an active role in the narrative, set in a Cape Breton coal-mining village at the turn of the twentieth century. Wallace states that the story is his grandfather's story, transposed from the mines of Gloucestershire to those of Cape Breton. Both literally and metaphorically, *Boy of the Deeps* is the darker — and the more dramatic — of the two books. The text is livelier than that of *Duncan's Way* and more successful, I believe, in capturing the regional speech idiom.

The challenge of writing — and especially of illustrating — a story set almost entirely in darkness is admirably handled by Wallace. As James goes underground for the first time to work with his father, a steel cage takes them a thousand feet beneath the ocean where pit ponies haul ton after ton of rock and where the rats are accepted as companions. Recreating for the reader the underground experience, the text appeals to all the senses. James's head "was filled with the smell of rock and coal and damp," and "the sound of metal grinding against metal was deafening." James experiences the suffocating dust, an aching back, and blistered hands, becoming "so tired that even chewing was exhausting" and, later, coughing "so hard that he thought he was spitting coal and blood." Nevertheless, as might be

expected in a book for children, the full misery of life in the mines is played down. The overall tone is matter-of-fact, as Wallace focuses on the miners' sense of community and their understated courage.

Although the crisis is trite and predictable, *Boy of the Deeps* treats the cave-in almost as though it is an everyday occurrence. The danger is foreshadowed early in the book by the mother's warning ("Take care, my son. You know the deeps is dangerous") and by the depiction of the mine entrance jutting up "like a beast rising from the sea." When the ceiling collapses on James and his father, the camaraderie they had enjoyed as they worked the mine and shared their lunch now takes the form of father and son helping one another to survive. As they dig their way through the debris, they reach the miners on the other side, who joke with them and pass James around "like a prize puppy." The resilience of the miners is apparent: "Tomorrow they would go down into the deeps again, for they were miners and that was their job."

As in *Duncan's Way*, the illustrations move the narrative forward in a sequence of full-page scenes. Following the golden seascape of a Cape Breton dawn illuminating the endpapers, the illustrations move from a warm family kitchen to the early-morning village street, then to the looming mine entrance. The rest of the illustrations (eleven out of fourteen) are black, deep brown, and midnight blue. Human forms seem to meld into this dark background, except for the lamp-lit faces, shoulders, and arms. The faces, however, are not individualized. Even the pony is a large shadowy figure, more a machine than a living creature. As a result of the prevailing darkness, the illustrations risk becoming monotonous. The single bright note is the motif of the "three wild daisies tied with a cherry red ribbon" which James's mother has placed in his piece can, "On top of his bread and cod"; these blue-tinted daisies are a link to the living world and the blue sky aboveground.

Duncan's Way and *Boy of the Deeps* both draw attention to human ingenuity, cooperation, and resilience. Wallace is skilled at evoking atmosphere and his stories are strongly rooted in a sense of place and tradition. His young protagonists are not just participants in, but often initiators of, the action. (Although James doesn't exhibit the initiative and determination of Duncan, he does take in stride, and even looks forward to, a job that would daunt most children today.) The books balance an awareness of the hard lives some children experience with an appreciation of human accomplishment. They are thus effective in introducing young readers to ways of life and work that are now disappearing. "[My grandfather's] adventures were thrilling," says Wallace in a prefatory note to *Boy of the Deeps*, "but as the years passed, I began to understand how privileged I was to be born at a time in history when a boy could be a boy, growing naturally into manhood and free to choose his own destiny."

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Mothers Helping, Children Coping

Bun Bun's Birthday. Richard Scrimger. Illus. Gillian Johnson. Tundra, 2001. Unpag.